Chamorro language

Chamorro (English: /t[ð'moroʊ/;^[2] Chamorro: Finu' Chamorro (CNMI), Fino' CHamoru (Guam)^[3]) is an Austronesian language spoken by about 58,000 people (about 25,800 people on Guam and about 32,200 in the rest of the Mariana Islands and elsewhere). It is the native and spoken language of the Chamorro people, the indigenous people of the Marianas (Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Guam is a US territory while the CNMI has greater autonomy as a US commonwealth). There are three different dialects of Chamorro — Guamanian, Rotanese, and the general NMI (Saipan and Tinian) dialects.

Contents
Classification
Speakers
Revitalization efforts
Phonology
Vowels
Consonants
Grammar
Pronouns
Orthography
Vocabulary
Numbers
Days of the Week
Months
Basic phrases
Studies
See also
Footnotes
References
Notes
References
Further reading
External links

Classification

Unlike most of its neighbors, Chamorro is not classified as a $\underline{\text{Micronesian}}$ or $\underline{\text{Polynesian}}$ language. Rather, like $\underline{\text{Palauan}}$, it possibly constitutes an independent branch of the $\underline{\text{Malayo-Polynesian}}$ language family. [5][6]

At the time the Spanish rule over Guam ended, it was thought that Chamorro was a semi-creole language, with a substantial amount of the vocabulary of Spanish origin and beginning to have a high level of mutual intelligibility with Spanish. It is reported that even in the early 1920s, Spanish was reported to be a living language in Guam for commercial transactions, but the use of Spanish and Chamorro was rapidly declining as a result of English pressure.

Spanish influences in Chamorro exist due to three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Many words in the Chamorro lexicon are of <u>Latin</u> etymological origin via Spanish, but their use conforms with indigenous grammatical structures. Furthermore, indigenous pronunciation has "nativized" most words of foreign origin that have not conformed to the ways that indigenous speakers of the language are accustomed to making sounds. By some, it may be considered a <u>mixed language</u> under a historical point of view even though it remains independent and unique. In his *Chamorro Reference Grammar*, Donald M. Topping states:

Chamo	rro
Finu' Char	
Native to	Mariana
Native to	Islands
Ethnicity	Chamorro
Native speakers	58,000 (2005– 2015) ^[1]
Language family	Austronesian
	Malayo- Polynesian
	Chamorro
Official sta	atus
Official language in	Guam Northern Mariana Islands
Language o	codes
ISO 639-1	ch (http s://www.lo c.gov/stand ards/iso639 -2/php/lang codes_name. php?iso_639 _1=ch)
ISO 639-2	cha (http s://www.lo c.gov/stand ards/iso639 -2/php/lang codes_name. php?code_ID =79)
ISO 639-3	cha
Glottolog	cham1312 (h ttp://glott olog.org/re source/lang uoid/id/cha m1312)
<u>ELP</u>	Chamorro (htt p://www.endan geredlanguag es.com/lang/8 46)

"The most notable influence on Chamorro language and culture came from the Spanish.... There was wholesale borrowing of Spanish words and phrases into Chamorro, and there was even some borrowing from the Spanish sound system. But this borrowing was linguistically superficial. The bones of the Chamorro language remained intact.... In virtually all cases of borrowing, Spanish words were forced to conform to the Chamorro sound system.... While Spanish may have left a lasting mark on Chamorro vocabulary, as it did on many Philippine and South American languages, it had virtually no effect on Chamorro grammar.... Japanese influence on Chamorro was much greater than that of German but much less than Spanish. Once again, the linguistic influence was restricted exclusively to vocabulary items, many of which refer to manufactured objects....[8]



In contrast, in the essays found in *Del español al chamorro*. *Lenguas en contacto en el Pacífico* (2009), <u>Rafael Rodríguez-Ponga</u> refers to modern Chamorro as a "mixed language" of "Hispanic-Austronesian" origins and estimates that approximately 50% of the Chamorro lexicon comes from Spanish, whose contribution goes far beyond loanwords.

Rodríguez-Ponga (1995) considers Chamorro to be a Spanish-Austronesian or a Spanish-Austronesian mixed language or at least a language that has emerged from a process of contact and <u>creolization</u> on the island of Guam since modern Chamorro is influenced in vocabulary and has in its grammar many elements of Spanish origin: verbs, articles, prepositions, numerals, conjunctions, etc. [9]

The process, which began in the 17th century and ended in the early 20th century, meant a profound change from the old Chamorro (paleo-Chamorro) to modern Chamorro (neo-Chamorro) in its grammar, phonology, and vocabulary. [10]

Speakers

The Chamorro language is threatened, with a precipitous drop in language fluency over the past century. It is estimated that 75% of the population of Guam was literate in the Chamorro language around the time the United States captured the island during the Spanish–American War [11] (there are no similar language fluency estimates for other areas of the Mariana Islands during this time). A century later, the 2000 U.S. Census showed that fewer than 20% of Chamorros living in Guam speak their heritage language fluently, and the vast majority of those were over the age of 55.

A number of forces have contributed to the steep, post-World War II decline of Chamorro language fluency. There is a long history of colonization in the Marianas, beginning with the Spanish colonization in 1668 and, eventually, the American acquisition of Guam in 1898 (whose hegemony continues to this day). This imposed power structures privileging the language of the region's colonizers. According to estimates, a large majority, as stated above (75%), maintained active knowledge of the Chamorro language even during the Spanish colonial era, but this was all to change with the advent of American imperialism and enforcement of the English language.



Hafa Adai sign at Antonio B. Won Pat International Airport in Guam

In Guam, the language suffered additional suppression when the U.S. government banned the Chamorro language in schools and workplaces in 1922. They collected and burned all Chamorro dictionaries. [12] Similar policies were undertaken by the Japanese government when they controlled the region during World War II. After World War II, when Guam was recaptured by the United States, the American administrators of the island continued to impose "no Chamorro" language restrictions in local schools, teaching only English and disciplining students for speaking their indigenous tongue. [13]

Even though these oppressive language policies were progressively lifted, Chamorro usage had substantially decreased. Subsequent generations were often raised in households where only the oldest family members were fluent. Lack of exposure made it increasingly difficult to pick up Chamorro as a second language. Within a few generations, English replaced Chamorro as the language of daily life.

There is a difference in the rate of Chamorro language fluency between Guam and the rest of the Marianas. On Guam (called *Guåhan* by Chamorro speakers, from the word *guaha*, meaning "have"; its English gloss "We have" references the island's providing everything needed to live [14][15]) the number of native Chamorro speakers has dwindled in the last decade or so. In the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI), young Chamorros speak the language fluently but prefer to use English when speaking to their children. Chamorro is common among Chamorro households in the Northern Marianas, but fluency has greatly decreased among Guamanian Chamorros during the years of American rule in favor of American English, which is commonplace throughout the inhabited Marianas.

Today, NMI Chamorros and Guamanian Chamorros disagree strongly on each other's linguistic fluency. An NMI Chamorro would say that Guamanian Chamorros speak the language incorrectly or speak "broken Chamorro", whereas a Guamanian Chamorro might consider the form used by NMI Chamorros to be archaic.

Revitalization efforts

Representatives from Guam have unsuccessfully lobbied the United States to take action to promote and protect the language.

In 2013, "Guam will be instituting Public Law 31-45 (https://web.archive.org/web/20150924024021/http://www.guamlegislature.org/Public_Laws_31st/P.L.%2031-45%20SBill%20No.%2095-31.pdf), which increases the teaching of the Chamorro language and culture in Guam schools," extending instruction to include grades 7-10. [16]

Other efforts have been made in recent times, most notably Chamorro immersion schools. One example is the Huråo Guåhan Academy, at the Chamorro Village in Hagåtña, GU. This program is led by Ann Marie Arceo and her husband, Ray Arceo. According to Huråo's official YouTube page, "Huråo Academy is one if not the first Chamoru Immersion Schools that focus on the teaching of Chamoru language and Self-identity on Guam. Huråo was founded as a non-profit in June 2005." The academy has been praised by many for the continuity of the Chamoru language.

Other creative ways to incorporate and promote the Chamorro language have been found in the use of applications for smartphones, internet videos and television. From Chamorro dictionaries, $\frac{[18]}{}$ to the most recent "Speak Chamorro" app, $\frac{[19]}{}$ efforts are growing and expanding in ways to preserve and protect the Chamorro language and identity.

On YouTube, a popular Chamorro soap opera $Siha^{[20]}$ has received mostly positive feedback from native Chamorro speakers on its ability to weave dramatics, the Chamorro language, and island culture into an entertaining program. On TV, Nihi! Kids is a first-of-its-kind show, because it is targeted "for Guam's nenis that aims to perpetuate Chamoru language and culture while encouraging environmental stewardship, healthy choices and character development." [21]

Phonology

Chamorro has 24 phonemes: 18 are consonants and 6 are vowels.

Vowels

Chamorro has at least 6 vowels, which include:

- /a/, open back unrounded vowel equivalent to the "a" in "father."
- /æ/, near-open front unrounded vowel equivalent to the "a" in "cat."
- /e/, close-mid front unrounded vowel equivalent to the "e" in the Received Pronunciation of "met".
- /i/, close front unrounded vowel equivalent to the "ee" in "sleep."
- /o/, close-mid back unrounded vowel equivalent to the "o" in "corn."
- /u/, close back rounded vowel equivalent to the "u" in "flu."

Consonants

Below is a chart of Chamorro consonants; all are unaspirated.

Table of consonant phonemes of Chamorro

	Labial	Dental/ Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	<u>m</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>л</u>	ŋ	
Plosive	<u>p</u> <u>b</u>	<u>t</u> <u>d</u>		k g g ^w	3
Affricate		ÎS QZ			
Fricative	<u>f</u>	s			<u>h</u>
Тар		<u>r</u> ~√			
Approximant	(w)	Ī			

- /w/ does not occur initially.
- Affricates $\sqrt{\frac{1}{12}}$ $\sqrt{\frac{1}{12}}$ can be realized as palatal [£] $\sqrt{\frac{1}{12}}$ before non-low front vowels.

Grammar

Chamorro is a VSO or <u>verb–subject–object</u> language. However, the word order can be very flexible and change to SVO (<u>subject-verb-object</u>), like English, if necessary to convey different types of relative clauses depending on context and to stress parts of what someone is trying to say or convey. Again, that is subject to debate as those on Guam believe the Chamorro word order is flexible, but those in the CNMI do not.

Chamorro is also an <u>agglutinative language</u>, whose grammar allows <u>root words</u> to be modified by a number of <u>affixes</u>. For example, *masanganenñaihon* "talked a while (with/to)", passive marking prefix ma-, root verb sangan, referential suffix i "to" (forced <u>morphophonemically</u> to change to e) with <u>excrescent</u> consonant n, and suffix naihon "a short amount of time". Thus masanganennaihon masanganennaihon masanganennaihon "talked a while (something) for a while".

Chamorro has many Spanish <u>loanwords</u> and other words have Spanish etymological roots (such as *tenda* "shop/store" from Spanish *tienda*), which may lead some to mistakenly conclude that the language is a <u>Spanish creole</u>, but Chamorro very much uses its loanwords in a Micronesian way (*bumobola* "playing <u>ball</u>" from *bola* "ball, play ball" with verbalizing <u>infix</u> -*um*- and <u>reduplication</u> of the first syllable of root).

Chamorro is a predicate-initial head-marking language. It has a rich agreement system in the nominal and in the verbal domains.

Chamorro is also known for its <u>wh-agreement</u> in the verb. The agreement morphemes agree with features (roughly the <u>grammatical case</u> feature) of the question phrase and replace the regular subject—verb agreement in transitive realis clauses: [23]

 (1)
 Ha-fa'gasi
 si
 Juan
 i

 3sc.sa-wash
 PND
 Juan
 the

 kareta.
 car

 'Juan washed the car.'

(2) Hayi fuma'gasi i kareta? who? $\underline{\text{wh}[\text{NOM}]}$.wash the car

'Who washed the car?

Pronouns

This set of pronouns is found in Chamorro: [24]

	Free	Absolutive	Agentive	Irrealis nominative	Possessive
1st person singular	guåhu	yu'	hu	(bai) hu	-hu/-ku
2nd person singular	hågu	hao	un	un	-mu
3rd person singular	guiya	gui'	ha	u	-ña
1st person plural inclusive	hita	hit	ta	(u) ta	-ta
1st person plural exclusive	hami	ham	in	(bai) in	-mami
2nd person plural	hamyu	hamyu	en	en	-miyu
3rd person plural	siha	siha	ma	uha/u/uma	-ñiha

Orthography

Chamorro alphabet

,	A a	Åå	B b	CH (Guam)/Ch (NMI) ch	D d	E e	F	G g	H h	l i	K k	L I	M m	N n	$\frac{\tilde{N}}{\tilde{n}}$	NG (Guam)/Ng (NMI) ng	0	P p	R r	S s	T t	U	Yу
/?/ (glottal stop)	/ æ/	/ a/	/b/	/ts/	/d/	/e/	/f/	/ g/	/h/	/i/	/k/	/\/	/m/	/n/	/ n/	/ŋ/	/o/	/p/	۱/	/s/	/t/	/u/	/dz/

Additionally, some letter combinations in Chamorro sometimes represent single phonemes. For instance, "ci+[vowel]" and "ti+[vowel]" are both pronounced [ʃ], as in *hustisia* ('justice') and the surname *Concepcion* (Spanish influence).

The letter $\langle y \rangle$ is usually (though not always) pronounced more like dz (an approximation of the regional Spanish pronunciation of y as [d3]); it is also sometimes used to represent the same sound as the letter i by Guamanian speakers. The phonemes represented by $\langle n \rangle$ and $\langle n \rangle$ as well as $\langle n \rangle$ and $\langle n \rangle$ are not always distinguished in print. Thus the Guamanian place name spelled \underline{Yona} is pronounced "Dzonia"/[dzona], not *[jona] as might be expected. $\langle n \rangle$ is usually pronounced like n rather than like English n. Chamorro n is usually a tap n, but is rolled n between vowels, and it is a retroflex approximant n, like English n, at the beginning of words. Words that begin with n in the Chamorro lexicon are exclusively loanwords.

Chamorro has geminate consonants which are written double (GG, DD, KK, MM, NGNG, PP, SS, TT), native <u>diphthongs</u> AI and AO, plus OI, OE, IA, IU, IE in loanwords; <u>penultimate stress</u>, except where marked otherwise, if marked at all in writing, usually with an <u>acute accent</u>, as in *asút* 'blue' or *dángkulu* 'big'. Unstressed vowels are limited to /ə i u/, though they are often spelled A E O. Syllables

may be consonant-vowel-consonant, as in *che'lu* 'sibling', *diskåtga* 'unload', *mamåhlåo* 'shy', or *oppop* 'lie face down', *gåtus* (Old Chamorro word for 100), *Hagåtña* (capital of Guam); B, D, and G are not distinguished from P, T, and K in that position..

Today, there is an ongoing issue on the Chamorro language orthography between NMI Chamorros and Guamanian Chamorros (example: NMI Chamorro vs. Guamanian CHamoru). As of 2021, the Guamanian Chamorros have come out with an official orthography for the Guamanian dialect, [25] whereas the NMI Chamorros have yet to develop an official orthography. Rather, the NMI Chamorros spell their words based on how it sounds.

Vocabulary

Numbers

Current common Chamorro uses only the number words of Spanish origin: *uno*, *dos*, *tres*, etc. Old Chamorro used different number words based on categories: basic numbers (for date, time, etc.), living things, inanimate things, and long objects.

English	Modern Chamorro	Old Chamorro					
English		Basic Numbers	Living Things	Inanimate Things	Long Objects		
one	unu/una (time)	håcha	maisa	hachiyai	takhachun		
two	dos	hugua	hugua	hugiyai	takhuguan		
three	tres	tulu	tatu	to'giyai	taktulun		
four	kuåttru'	fatfat	fatfat	fatfatai	takfatun		
five	singku'	lima	lalima	limiyai	takliman		
six	sais	gunum	guagunum	gonmiyai	ta'gunum		
seven	sietti	fiti	fafiti	fitgiyai	takfitun		
eight	ochu'	guålu'	guagualu	guatgiyai	ta'gualun		
nine	nuebi	sigua	sasigua	sigiyai	taksiguan		
ten	dies	månot	maonot	manutai	takmaonton		
hundred	siento	gåtus	gåtus	gåtus	gåtus/manapo		

■ The number 10 and its multiples up to 90 are dies (10), benti (20), trenta (30), kuårenta (40), sinkuenta (50), sisenta (60), sitenta (70), ochenta (80), nubenta (90). These are similar to the corresponding Spanish terms diez (10), veinte (20), treinta (30), cuarenta (40), cincuenta (50), sesenta (60), setenta (70), ochenta (80), noventa (90).

Days of the Week

Current common Chamorro uses only the Days of the Week which are Spanish in origin but are spelled differently. There is currently an effort by Chamorro Language advocates to introduce/re-introduce native terms for the Chamorro Days of the Week. Unfortunately, both major dialects differ in the terminology used. Guamanian advocates support a number-based system derived from Old Chamorro Numerals, whereas the NMI advocates support a more unique system.

English	Contemporary Chamorro	Modern Chamorro (NMI Dialect)	Modern Chamorro (Guamanian Dialect)
Sunday	Damenggo/Damenggu	Gonggat	Hachåni (Day One)
Monday	Lunes/Lunis	Ha'åni (literally means day)	Haguåni (Day Two)
Tuesday	Måttes/Måttis	Gua'åni	Tulåni (Day Three)
Wednesday	Metkoles/Metkolis	Tolu'åni	Fatfåni (Day Four)
Thursday	Huebes/Huebis	Fa'guåni	Limåni (Day Five)
Friday	Betnes/Betnis	Nimpu'ak	Gunumåni (Day Six)
Saturday	Såbalu	Sambok	Fitåno (Day Seven)

Months

Before the Spanish-based 12-month calendar became predominant, the Chamoru 13-month lunar calendar was commonly used. The first month in the left column below corresponds with January. In the right column are the Spanish-based months.

1	Tumaiguini	

January	Ineru

2	Maimu'
3	Umatalaf
4	Lumuhu
5	Makmamao
6	Fananaf/Mananaf
7	Semu
8	Tenhos
9	Lumamlam
10	Fangualu/Fa'gualu
11	Sumongsong
12	Umayanggan
13	Umagahaf

February	Fibreru			
March	Måtsu			
April	Abrit			
May	Måyu			
June	Huño			
July	Hulio			
August	Agosto			
September	Septembre			
October	Oktubri			
November	Nubembre			
December	Disembre			

[26]

Basic phrases

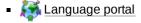
Håfa adai! / Håfa dei! (phonetic spelling)	"Hello!"	Adios påt Esta [Spanish introduced]	Good bye.	Asta [Spanish introduced from hasta] agupa'	Until tomorrow
Buenas [Spanish introduced]	Greetings	Put Fabot påt [Spanish introduced formal] Fan [Chamorro Informal]	please	Si Yu'us ma'åsi'	Thank you (lit: God have mercy)
Kao mamaolek hao?	How are you? [lit.: Are you doing well?] [informal]	Fanatåtti [Indigenous]	leave later [informal]	Buen probechu [Spanish introduced] påt Hågu mås	"You're welcome"
Håfa tatatmanu hao?	How are you?[formal]	Buenas dias [Spanish introduced] påt Manana si Yu'us (mostly	Good morning.		
Håyi na'ån mu?	What is your name?	used on Guam)			
I na'ån hu si Chris	My name is Chris.	Buenas tåtdes [Spanish introduced]	Good afternoon.		
Ñålang yu'	I'm hungry.	Buenas noches [Spanish	Good		
Må'o yu'	I'm thirsty.	introduced] påt Puengen Yu'us	night.		

Studies

Chamorro is studied at the University of Guam and in several academic institutions of Guam and the Northern Marianas.

Researchers in several countries are studying aspects of Chamorro. In 2009, the Chamorro Linguistics International Network (CHIN) was established in Bremen, Germany. CHiN was founded on the occasion of the Chamorro Day (27 September 2009) which was part of the programme of the Festival of Languages. The foundation ceremony was attended by people from Germany, Guam, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States of America. [27]

See also



Footnotes

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External links

- Chamorro-English Online Dictionary (http://www.chamoru.info/dictionary/)
- https://web.archive.org/web/20131223170220/http://ns.gov.gu/language.html
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- Index cards of plant and animal names in Chamorro language in Kaipuleohone.

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